

## living the dream by iridescentpetrichor

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**Summary:**

“So, anyways, Robin mentioned a few people at the highschool are heading to the lake tonight as one final ‘hoorah’ before school starts. I was wondering if you wanted to tag along with us?”

“Isn’t it a little sad for two people who’ve already graduated to go to a party full of highschoolers?” You asked despite how little you already cared as long as you got to spend the night with him.

“Yeah, but the free alcohol.”

## living the dream

It was a warm Tuesday afternoon, nearing the end of summer – not that it mattered for you or Steve considering you were both out of high school. You stood at the counter of Family Video where Steve was manning the register. Or at least, he was supposed to be manning the register. Currently, he was sitting on top of the counter talking to you about the unbearable summer heat of Hawkins. When a customer approached, you had to cover up your laughter at Steve rushing to jump off the counter, cursing under his breath.

He hurriedly rings the man up, barely giving him a glance as he handed the movie back and took the money. As he left, he dramatically turned back to you. “As I was saying before I was so *rudely* interrupted.”

“By your job?” You laughed, eliciting a smile from Steve. You loved making him smile, it was one of your favorite things about him.

“So, anyways, Robin mentioned a few people at the highschool are heading to the lake tonight as one final ‘hoorah’ before school starts. I was wondering if you wanted to tag along with us?”

“Isn’t it a little sad for two people who’ve already graduated to go to a party full of highschoolers?” You asked despite how little you already cared as long as you got to spend the night with him.

“Yeah, but the free alcohol.” *Ah, of course. It was a highschool party after all.*

You hum, pretending to think for a moment, “well, you’ve convinced me.” You smile brightly. “What time?”

“I can pick you up at 7:30. Deal?” You nod, moving away from the counter. When you turn to leave, yelling goodbye to Robin without looking behind you, and walk out the store, you miss the way Steve’s smile fades when you pull away. Just before the door to the shop closes, you call out, “see you tonight!” And get into your car, trying to ignore the butterflies bubbling up in your stomach.

“See you.” He mutters with a dopey smile on his face, knowing full well you couldn’t hear him.

“Dude, you are so whipped for this girl.” Steve jumped, nearly knocking his elbow against the register before he stopped himself.

“Jesus! How long have you been standing there?”

“Long enough to know you’re not doing your damn job.” Robin smiles, flipping him off before grabbing a stack of movies to stack on the shelves. Steve sighed, crossing his arms and looking outside where you were just standing. She was right, Steve was so whipped for you.

7:30 came quicker than you would’ve liked. You stood in front of your mirror, criticizing every little thing about how you looked in the bikini you bought at the beginning of the summer. Of course, you never had the opportunity nor the confidence to wear it in public, but it was the only swimsuit you had that fit. You hear a car pull up to your driveway through your open window and quickly throw a loose dress over your swimsuit.

By the time Steve got one knock in, you ripped the front door open, smiling widely. He’s wearing a navy T-shirt paired with red swim shorts, and you enjoy seeing how happy he looks. Ever since everything went down in Hawkins the past few years, it got harder to get a genuine smile out of him.

“Hey!” You say, taking a moment to catch your breath.

He laughs for a moment, looking at you. “Ready to go?”

You nod, calling out a goodbye to wherever in the house your parents were and followed him outside.

The two of you climb into his car, neither one of you speaking as he pulls out of your driveway. The silence feels deafening, both of you suddenly too nervous to say anything. Tension builds quickly between you two, and you can’t help but notice how stuffy Steve’s car feels despite the fact that Steve’s window was rolled down. You hold back a sigh, leaning your head against your hand and looking

outside at the passing trees.

“We still have to pick Robin up, by the way.” You nod at Steve’s words, hoping Robin’s comforting presence will relieve the tension in the car.

The air in the car seems to clear the moment Robin gets in the car, and it’s not long before she and Steve are having a dumb argument over whether or not Risky Business was a better movie than The Breakfast Club.

“It’s a great movie! It brings all the different groups together in detention!” Robin yelled, and you could’ve sworn they’ve had this argument before.

“You just think Molly Ringwald is hot!”

“And you don’t?”

You laugh louder than you anticipated at your friends, and they both stop.

Steve glances at you as he drives down the empty road, “Y/N, what do you think?”

“Y/N obviously you know the right answer-”

“Okay Robin at least let her talk-”

“I don’t know!” You cut him off, throwing your arms up in surrender. “I never saw Risky Business when it was out, but Robin did make me watch The Breakfast Club...”

“One point for me! I win, Harrington!”

“No no no, that doesn’t count she hasn’t even seen it-”

“Doesn’t matter, it’s not as good-”

“That’s not fair-”

“You’re just upset cause YN has good taste in movies-”

“She didn’t even say she liked it better-”

“But it still wins by default-”

“She hasn’t even seen it! YN, I’m renting Risky Business tomorrow and we’re watching it at my place.”

You did not miss the way Robin wiggled her eyebrows at you in the rearview mirror.

“Uh, yeah sure. I can- I can do that.” Robin laughs loudly behind you, and you reach around to hit her.

“She’s going to side with me!”

Steve shook his head, laughing as he pulled over on the side of the road. You could see the lake in the distance, nerves finally catching up to you, and sighed to yourself as you prepared for a long night. Why did you agree to this anyways?

“Alright, let’s have fun!” Steve cheered, climbing out of the car.

Oh right. *That’s why.*

He quickly takes his shirt off, shoving it in the backseat while Robin shrugged off her shorts and t-shirt, revealing a light blue one piece, before doing the same. Hesitantly, you followed suit, removing your dress, and throwing it into the pile of clothes. Your arms instantly shot up and rest around your midriff as the three of you made your trek towards the lake.

It didn’t take much walking before you were stepping over the trash people have left around in their drunken stupors. Glancing at the beer cans strewn about, you briefly wondered who would be the unlucky one to have to clean them all up before Robin grabbed your hand and pulled you towards the party.

One thing you knew for sure, was there were *a lot* of high schoolers here. And not only were you and Steve not *in* high school anymore, you felt way too exposed in your bikini. You tried to turn to Steve to have someone else out of place to stick to, but he was already talking to a girl – probably a senior? You’d seen her around the halls, but she

was never in your circle. The pit in your stomach feels heavier by the second, so you look to Robin for help.

She's already heading towards the lake with a couple band friends of hers, one you can even pinpoint as what you and Steve call "the girl" at work based on how often she comes to visit when Robin's working to "check out the movies" but you've seen enough flirting to know better by now.

Your two best friends were gone, and you feel like an idiot for agreeing to go to this stupid party. It feels like everyone is staring at you, and your arms stay firmly around your sides.

It's not like you could just leave, anyways. Your house is across town and you're not walking home this close to sunset in the least amount of clothes you think you've ever worn. And your clothes are locked in Steve's car. Which is definitely locked.

There's no "corner" that you can curl up and hide from people in, so you walk down towards the lake and find a relatively empty spot to sit, dipping your legs in and trying to relax. After all, if you're stuck here for the next couple hours you might as well try to enjoy yourself.

You almost begin to enjoy yourself as you start people watching, observing the faces of the people you've seen around town or school a couple times as they stumble around to the music playing out of the boombox someone brought. Living in a small town meant that you'd probably seen these people before, and you'd definitely see them again in your lifetime. But they definitely won't remember it, cause most of the people here seem drunk enough that they won't remember much in the morning.

It feels like no time has passed, but if someone asked you, you couldn't accurately tell them how long you've been sitting there. Suddenly, you feel a hand on your shoulder that makes you jerk back, nearly falling into the lake before the mystery person steadies you.

"Whoa, hey." Steve's voice is soft, crouching down to your level as he keeps his hand on your shoulder until he's sure you're not gonna

suddenly drop into the lake. “I was looking for you, dude. You just kinda disappeared.”

“Oh yeah,” you force a smile, avoiding his stare in favor of looking at the people swimming in the lake. “I guess you just seemed sort of... busy.”

He sits down next to you, his own legs now dipping into the water as well. “Yeah it seems like some people didn’t get the memo that I’m not really top dog anymore, huh?” When you don’t respond he frowns, scooting closer to you. “Hey, you okay?”

“Yeah, I’m fine.” You look him in the eyes, trying to convince him despite both of you knowing your smile isn’t quite reaching your eyes. “Seriously, don’t worry about me. Go have fun!”

Still, he refuses to move. “I’m not going to leave you just sitting here alone, Y/N.” He slips off the rock the two of you were sitting on, into the lake, and grins at you. “C’mon, don’t make me pull you in.”

You roll your eyes, but can’t stop the smile from creeping up onto your face. With a quiet laugh, you follow his lead and hop off the rock into the lake. The cold water is a shock, but you can’t find it in you to care because Steve is staring at you like you’re the only person in the world and it feels like nothing else matters in that moment. Carefully, and almost too slowly, Steve swims closer to you, placing his hand on one of the rocks beside you to hold himself there. The space between the two of you is practically nonexistent, and for the second time that day, butterflies flutter around in your belly. It feels like the entire world stops spinning just for you, and when you look up at him, he begins to lean closer, nearly closing the gap between you until-

A sharp scream erupts from somewhere around you and before you can process who that was or why they screamed in the first place, cold water splashes into your face. You shielded your eyes from the onslaught of water, laughter bubbling up in your throat. A few people cheer at the size of the stranger’s cannonball, and once the water settles, you feel Steve’s gaze stuck on you

“Got a staring problem?”

“You’re beautiful.”

Whatever joke you were going to make dies on your tongue. You stare at him in awe, trying to process that you did, in fact, hear him correctly. At your silence, Steve reels backwards, groaning.

“Sorry I just-”

You cut him off, pulling him against you and kissing him. One of his arms loop around your waist, and he presses the other against a rock, keeping you two afloat. It almost doesn’t feel real, and *god* is Steve a good kisser. A moment goes by before you hear a singular voice whooping and hollering, recognizing it to be Robin’s, and smile through the kiss.

You pull away too soon for your liking to catch your breath, and stare at him.

“Having fun yet?” His arm stays hooked around your waist, holding you close.

You feel like your face is gonna split open from how much you’re smiling. “Yeah, I think so. Although we haven’t had any of that free alcohol you mentioned.” If it was even possible, Steve’s smile widened.

With that, the two of you clamber out of the lake, and Steve grabs your hand as he runs over to a cooler of beer he spotted on his way over to you. His hand doesn’t leave yours for the rest of the night.